

# Salt River Fire Department Operating Guidelines

## Mayday Readiness and Response

JULY 2014

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### Definition of a Mayday Situation

*Any situation where a firefighter is unable to safely exit the hazard zone or an event that cannot be resolved by that individual within 30 seconds*

Any member working on duty is empowered to call a Mayday when the above conditions exist. This can be during response; onscene of any incident or any time when a member becomes in trouble and a portable radio is available. Early identification of a Mayday situation is critical. The longer it takes to declare a Mayday situation the less likely a successful resolution is possible.

A Mayday is initiated by any member communicating "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday" via portable radio. Ideally Tactical Radio Operators in the dispatch center will hear this transmission and initiate a response.

### The Rule of Mayday Readiness

*It is every individual firefighter's responsibility to maintain a high level of Mayday readiness at all times. This includes everyday preparation and prevention as well as the practiced ability to communicate and respond to a Mayday scenario.*

"Mayday" procedures and actions are perishable for all levels of an incident organization. The strategic, tactical and task levels of hazard zone management should consistently and regularly be exercised for "Mayday" procedures and practices. This also includes the Dispatch/Tactical Radio component. The preparation should be developed into everyday activities and practiced at the company level.

### Definition of Mayday Readiness

*In order to reach a position of Mayday readiness, a firefighter must adopt an attitude and preparation to look at every incident from the standpoint of "what if I or another firefighter gets in trouble" prior to the development of a bad scenario or outcome. Additionally, the NFPA 1500 Standard defines mayday readiness as the ability to "don, doff and manipulate the SCBA in zero visibility while wearing firefighting gloves."*

Effectively preventing Mayday situations involve multiple factors. Command Officers, Company Officers and Firefighters must reinforce the prevention of scenarios that lead to a Mayday. The most important factors for Mayday prevention begin with the following operational standards:

- Working within an Incident Command System/Risk Management System
- Working within the Incident Action Plan
- Always being accountable to someone within the incident command system (***Never Freelance***)
- Maintaining individual and crew air management
- Management of work cycles
- Monitoring distances traveled into buildings
- Layering of resources and providing for a tactical reserve
- Planning and acting out an exit plan

In order to establish effective Mayday readiness, it is necessary to recognize that Mayday readiness has 2 components. These components are **Prevention and Response**.

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### Task Level Mayday Readiness and Response

Every firefighter has the responsibility to actively and routinely prepare for the prevention of Mayday situations and the response to Mayday situations.

Individual firefighter responsibilities for Mayday prevention include the following:

- Maintaining SCBA proficiency
- Practicing individual air management (task level of M.P. 202.05C)
- Use and care personal protective equipment
- Portable radio proficiency and use
- Practiced crew communications
- Roving/replacement firefighter integration into crew
  - Individual firefighters have to be responsible to ask if not initiated by Company Officer

The Company Officer is responsible for Crew development and practice. Consistent training and practice with regards to Mayday prevention is critical for rapid and appropriate response in a true Mayday situation. This involves setting a consistent attitude and expectations for all crew members regarding Mayday readiness. This also involves developing routines that are encouraged and participated in by the Company Officer.

Company Officer responsibility for Mayday preventions include:

- Integrating a daily SCBA check into the crew routine
- Practicing crew communication in the hazard zone
- Rover integration into crew
  - Individual rovers are responsible to ask if not explicitly discussed at the beginning of a shift
- Maintaining knowledge of portable radios and practicing their use
- Ensuring Company Officer responsibilities and expectations are clear to the entire crew
- Practicing and maintaining crew integrity/accountability
- Instilling the standard that firefighters should always stay on a hoseline

The individual firefighter's response to a Mayday situation should be focused on increasing the chances of survival. The development of these skills truly begins at the Recruit level and should continue throughout a firefighter's career on a daily basis. The response to an individual firefighter's Mayday should initially be managed at the company level and as the Mayday communication happens this will initiate the defined help order.

Individual firefighter responsibilities for Mayday response include:

- Maintaining preparation and reaction skills
- Early communication of Mayday situation utilizing the above standard
- Controlling an emotional response to the situation
- Once the Mayday situation is recognized and reported, each firefighter should remember:
  - B.O.A. = Breath, Organize and Act
- Utilization of IAFF Fireground Survival training
  - SCBA familiarization
  - High/low profile wall breach

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- Disentanglement
- Ladder bail
- Window hang
- GRAB LIVES
  - G = Check Air Gauge
  - R = Radio for Assistance
  - A = Activate PASS Device
  - B = Control Breathing, Conserve Air
  - L = Stay Low
  - I = Illuminate, Turn Flashlight On
  - V = Make Loud Noises (Volume)
  - E = Find An Exit
  - S = Shield Your Airway (last ditch effort)

### Tactical Level Mayday Readiness and Response

The tactical level of every incident has the responsibility to actively and routinely work toward Mayday prevention and preparedness. The Battalion Chief and F.I.T. or I.S.O. tandem best manages these responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

- Working within the overall incident action plan
- Continual assessment of the decision making model within the sector operations
- Management of tactical objectives for the sector through position and functions of crews working within this sector
- Sector level air management
  - Managing geographic working area
  - Work/rest cycles
  - Distances into building
- Accountability
  - Maintain adequate resources assigned to the sector (remember to TAG hose lines)
  - Layered resources in position to manage tactical objectives and prepared to respond in the event of Mayday
- Maintaining effective and appropriate communications with Command
  - Sector C.A.N. reports
  - Requesting or de-committing resources

In the event of a Mayday situation, the Sector Officer will take responsibility of the resolution of the Mayday situation. It will be necessary for the Incident Commander to support the Mayday Sector Officer with appropriate and adequate resources to manage the Mayday at the same time reinforcing the surrounding geographical and/or functional sectors to continue the incident mitigation. Pessimistically projecting resource requirements for sector operations has the potential to increase the survivability of a Mayday situation. Other responsibilities include:

- Responding to the Mayday from the inside out
- Manage communications with the down firefighter
- Manage the search and rescue efforts for the down firefighter if necessary
- Increase and maintain resources assigned to the sector
  - Manage the logistical support as well
- Improve survivability and tenability

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- Increase exterior access to sector
  - Utilize RIC bag
    - Request additional if necessary
  - Improve ventilation
- Recognize and support the help order of a Mayday
  - Self-rescue by the Mayday initiator
  - Down firefighter's crew
  - Crews working in the same sector
    - Crews with firefighting assignments
    - Crews from and "on-deck" position or staged outside of the sector as a tactical reserve
    - Additional resources requested from the Incident Commander
  - Crews from other sectors
  - Requesting additional staged resources
  - Communications with surrounding geographical or functional sectors
- Surrounding sectors, not involved in the Mayday
  - Continue the firefight in support of the Mayday
  - Actively account for all members assigned to sector
  - Report P.A.R.'s to Incident Commander as required
- Maintain accountability of crews working to resolve the Mayday
  - Utilizing the Safety Channel may be the best route of communications to the Command Van regarding accountability
- **Maintain awareness of fire and smoke conditions, as well as building conditions, as rescue efforts are initiated**
  - **There is no greater time for a clear and concise utilization of the Risk Management System than during a Mayday event**
  - **It is not acceptable to create further Mayday situations when resolving an existing Mayday**
  - **These conditions must be communicated to the Incident Commander especially as conditions deteriorate and have an immediate impact upon the rescue efforts**

### Strategic Level Mayday Readiness and Response

The Incident Command Team has the ultimate responsibility for actively and continually providing for the prevention and response to a Mayday situation. The incident command team consists of the Incident Commander, Support Officer and the Senior Advisor. There are other positions and personnel that will provide support when working within a Command Van including the staging radio channel, logistics and safety.

The responsibilities for the Strategic Level of an incident for the prevention and response to a Mayday include:

- Continually reassess the incident through the strategic decision making model
  - Critical fireground factors
    - Considering elapsed time into the incident
  - Risk Management position
  - Strategy
  - Evaluation of the incident action plan (is there a plan B?)
  - Resources
    - Consider remaining onscene firefighters welfare

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- Plan and prepare for communications challenges
  - Mayday initiated on wrong radio channel
  - Multiple, simultaneous Maydays
- Strategic level communications
  - Control incident communications
    - Once an Mayday is initiated, all sectors should manage their communications to critical messages only over the radio
      - No news in good news
    - Manage communications pace and tone
    - Incident and Mayday always remain on the same tactical channel
    - Accountability
    - Tactical benchmarks
    - C.A.N. and P.A.R. reports requests to Sectors as needed
- Continuing strategic level continuity
  - Manage and support the Mayday at the strategic level
    - Ensure Battalion Chiefs are assigned to all critical tactical level positions
      - Firefighting sectors (geographical and/or functional)
      - Medical sectors
      - Transportation sectors
    - Continue to manage remaining firefight
      - **Ensure the overall incident actions match the overall incident conditions**
      - Maintain the overall incident organization
      - Provide for tactical level accountability
      - Manage resource deployment
      - Control access to the hazard zone through the Sector Officers
      - Support tactical level considerations
        - Improve access to building
        - Support with ventilation
        - Continue to address the fire when conditions will allow
- Communicate progress appropriately to the policy and political levels of city government

The tactical benchmark for the end point of a Mayday is “Mayday resolved”. The critical points that have to be confirmed prior to giving the benchmark of “Mayday resolved” is:

- The individual(s) that are experiencing the Mayday situation are removed from the hazard zone
- All members involved in the rescue are accounted for and are out of the hazard zone
- All members working in all other sectors are accounted for
- The Incident Commander can give a PAR for the entire hazard zone

The Officer of the individual sector in which the Mayday occurred has the responsibility to notify command of the completion of the rescue and that all members involved are out of the hazard zone. The Incident Commander has the obligation to complete the accountability process for the entire incident and complete the benchmark “Mayday resolved”.

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### Dispatch Center Responsibilities

It is critical to acknowledge the role the dispatch center and most specifically the tactical radio operators will have in the resolution of a Mayday. A significant component of the overall hazard zone management system and firefighter safety is the contact between the incident command team and the dispatch center, no matter the incident size. The tactical radio operator responsibilities for a Mayday response are as follows:

- A Mayday is initiated by a member in the field communicating “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday” on the radio
- A Mayday can be initiated by anyone, at anytime working in the field and has access to a portable radio
- Mayday is not just a fireground term, it can be used in any hazard zone
- Upon initiation of a Mayday, the tactical radio operator shall:
  - Transmit the emergency traffic tone
  - Voice on the tactical channel: “We have a Mayday on the scene, all units hold your traffic”
  - Repeats the Mayday message using the standard radio order model
  - Allows for the Incident Commander to speak to the Mayday initiator
- If the first Fire Department Company onscene of a fire incident initiates the Mayday, the tactical radio operator shall:
  - Assures the member that “help is on the way”
  - Maintains communications with the Mayday initiator until other units arrive
    - Ensure the communications are necessary and not to fill dead radio time
  - Reminds the member to initiate their “GRAB LIVES” procedures
  - Ensures all responding units are aware of the Mayday
  - Upgrades the assignment to a Mayday nature code
- The entire dispatch center provides redundant monitoring of the Mayday radio traffic
- The dispatch center provides some automatic activation of processes to assist with a Mayday incident. These include:
  - Additional resources
    - Upon the initiation of a Mayday, the incident is upgraded using the Mayday nature code
      - If 3 – 1 incident, then balanced to 1<sup>st</sup> Alarm Mayday
      - If 1<sup>st</sup> Alarm incident, then balanced to 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm Mayday
      - Continues to 9 Alarms
    - Provide additional medical or transport resources as appropriate
  - Monitoring of all *possible* hazard zone channels

### Conclusion

- It is every firefighters responsibility to maintain their preparedness for a Mayday situation
- The only way to guarantee a successful outcome of a Mayday situation is to **PREVENT IT!**
- Mayday prevention and preparedness requires action at all levels of an incident command system
- The Ultimate goal for any Mayday response is to successfully resolve the Mayday and at the same time not create any further Mayday situations
- Any Mayday situation elevates the emotional levels and will test a command system.
- All members, at all levels of the incident involving a Mayday should remember **B.O.A.**

**Breathe, Organize and Act!**



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